

**Yolo Natural Heritage Program
Steering Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary
January 26, 2009**

Action Items

- Follow up with RCD to obtain copies of the Willow Slough Study.
- Poll committee members by e-mail on preferred days for field trip to Chickahominy Creek restoration project.
- Schedule Working Group meetings.
- Send out schedule for future SAC meetings.
- Provide a schedule for completion of the draft plan.
- Send out links to other HCP/NCCPs in the region
- Arrange for presentation on the Bay Delta Conservation Plan

Summary

1. Call Meeting to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:12 p.m. by Maria Wong.

2. Introductions and Welcome

Maria introduced and welcomed consultants Paul Cylinder and Pete Rawlings of SAIC, who will be working with our project. They each provided some background on their expertise and other HCP/NCCP activities. They are currently also working with the Bay-Delta conservation planning effort and Butte County NCCP/HCP program.

Attendees:

Steering Committee Members

Vinton Hawkins, Sierra Holdings
Glen Holstein, CNPS/Tuleyome
Yvonne LeMaitre, Wild Oak Farms
Stefan Lorenzato, Yolo County Flood Control & Water Conservation District
Chad Roberts, Yolo Audubon
Mike Hall, Conaway Ranch

JPA Member Agency staff

Dan Sokolow, City of Woodland
Sandra White, City of West Sacramento
Warren Westrup, Yolo County Parks and Resources

JPA Staff

Maria Wong, Executive Director
Susan Garbini, Student Intern
Dan Airola, Airola Environmental Consulting
Paul Cylinder, SAIC
Pete Rawlings, SAIC

Interested Parties

Rick Landon, Yolo County Agricultural Commissioner
George Phillips, Conaway Ranch
Kent Smith, Department of Fish & Game
James Navicky, Department of Fish & Game
Eric Tattersall, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

3. Approval of agenda order

The order of the agenda was approved.

4. Meeting Summaries and Action Items

Minor corrections were made to the 11-24-08 and 12-08-08 meeting summaries.

Comments regarding statements made by Dan Efseaff in his 12-08 presentation:

- The characterization of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' position on vegetation on levees as "inconsistent" was questioned.
- The statement that "Corridors...are more robust when they exist side-by-side with agriculture" was not agreed upon by all committee members.

Concerns will be revisited when the SAC discussions on conservation strategies and adaptive management take place.

Action Items

- Staff will follow up with the RCD to obtain copies of the Willow Slough Study.
- A field trip to the Chickahominy Creek restoration project site will be scheduled after checking with committee members on preferred times.

5. Presentation by Maria Wong, YNHP Director, on decision process and proposed project schedule: "Discussion, Negotiation and Reaching Agreement"

[See handout and PPT presentation on YNHP website: yoloconservationplan.org under the "calendar" and meeting date.]

The presentation was a review of the fundamentals and characteristics of the collaborative process for group decision making. It is intended to describe the "decision space" for this group and to improve styles and processes of communication, listening, and negotiation to ensure a successful process and outcome.

Collaboration may be defined as "a structured process where participants agree to focus on their self-interest and to pose no harm to other's self-interest." In order to be effective, it needs to be inclusive and diverse, transparent, accountable, fact-based, and "hard on problems; soft on people".

It is important to determine in advance where the "decision space" is for the group and to focus discussion in that area. It is also important to recognize that our beliefs influence how we select and evaluated data and experience – the tendency is to select data that supports our beliefs.

There are many different styles of communicating and they are all valid. Some guidelines for communicating effectively include:

- Value everyone's needs
- State what I need but take into account the needs of others
- Hold myself and others accountable
- Accept the right and responsibility to ask for what I need

Empathetic listening involves creating common ground for collaborative problem solving so that disagreements include interest in the concerns of others.

Negotiating concepts:

- Explore possibilities without committing
- Develop agreements in principle
- Identify "gives and takes"
- Development agreements in detail
- If needed, negotiate multi-interest outcomes

DISCUSSION

A question was raised whether Maria's judgment would supersede the committee's in determining where the "decision space" appropriately lies. The reply was that there will be an interactive process involving all committee members for agreeing on what topics are relevant for discussion. The process will start with information and data that is available to everyone. Different definitions may lead to different interpretations of "facts." It is important that the group develop effective communicating skills and processes, that include "rules of the road" to ensure productive exchange of information.

Initially, we will need to explore a variety of possible scenarios and options without committing to a particular option. There might need to be "sidebar" negotiations among committee members with differing viewpoints in order to achieve agreement on a proposal.

The question was asked how much "buy in" the JPA will have into the process. The response was that the role of the SAC is to develop proposals to present to the JPA for approval.

6. Presentation and discussion regarding draft HCP/NCCP document outline [See *handout*]

Paul and Dan presented the draft outline of the HCP/NCCP document. Dan pointed out that this is a generic outline and the actual report will likely vary in many of the details. Each plan is unique because each area is unique. However, this is a starting point.

Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview

This section provides important information about the process, including goals and principles that guided the development of the report. It also establishes the regulatory context, which is important in terms of the relationship to other planning processes being developed under the same federal and state regulations.

The scope includes the geographic area covered by the plan, the covered species and natural communities, covered activities subject to the plan jurisdiction, and the duration of the permitting process authorized under the plan

Delineation of the scope is important as context for the decisions that will be made about the plan. A lot of information is still needed to fill in the “holes”, e.g. for covered activities.

The overview section documents that the process has been properly carried out under state and federal laws.

Chapter 2: Existing Ecological Conditions

This section describes the environmental and ecological setting, including historical physical and biological conditions present in the planning area, with a focus on changes that have occurred in habitats.

QUESTION: Presumably Yolo County includes a lot of agricultural landscapes – is it necessary to change the name from “natural landscapes” to include these areas?

RESPONSE: This is the language from the NCCP Act and it is appropriate to call “ag” a “natural community” in this context, with certain caveats.

Chapter 3: Description of Covered Activities

This section will identify activities in the planning area that will have impacts on environment and habitat and that are subject to permitting under the plan.

QUESTION: Are animals and plants viewed differently?

RESPONSE: Plants and animals are covered by the same general terminology: e.g. mitigation, minimization, recover, etc. These are all included as “conservation measures” for plants and animals.

Chapter 4: Assessment of Impacts and Level of Take

This section will describe the environmental baseline in the plan area and will provide the basis upon which impacts to covered species and their habitats are assessed. Cumulative, indirect, simple, and focused effects are included.

Chapter 5: Conservation Strategy

This section will present the biological and conservation goals and objectives for each natural community and species covered by the plan. It will include

- Conservation measures and actions
- Monitoring strategies for measuring and assessing success or failure of conservation measures
- Adaptive management program (i.e. how monitoring will be used to improve the program over time)
- Implementation schedule

Chapter 6: Implementation

This section will describe how the program will be funded to pay the costs to implement the plan, including funding sources and assurances. It will also summarize implementation actions such as plan monitoring and reporting, and processes for plan and permit amendment, suspension, and revocation.

QUESTION: There is some concern that the plan could undermine the need for surveys in the future.

RESPONSE: The plan can require ongoing surveys and monitoring. However, it may allow for a more streamlined process.

Chapter 7: Alternatives to Take Considered and Rejected

Federal and state laws require that alternative approaches be considered to those selected in the plan and explain why they were rejected and the basis for selecting these approaches.

Appendices:

Appendices will contain a lot of the data and detailed information that supports the plan. They allow the plan to be more focused.

Goals of the Plan

The goals of the plan are to 1) get agreement locally, 2) provide a document that can be used to issue permits, and 3) create a document that can live on for decades in order to be fully implemented.

Schedule

We expect to have a draft through Chapter 5 by July. A lot of information has already been developed or can be obtained from other organizations. We will have a schedule for the plan at the next meeting.

DISCUSSION

It is important to begin to see how the plan all fits together. We also need to develop a strategy before we start – soon. At present, it seems a somewhat nebulous assembly of bits and pieces. We need to see an overarching “big picture” soon, as there are some issues that may need to be resolved.

A preliminary presentation of Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 would be useful for creating a preliminary overview and guiding us on Chapter 5.

We need to engage in discussion to determine what are the ranges of strategies we want to employ. It will be a process of back and forth, with lots of revision and rewriting. Things will expand and contract as we move forward.

It was requested that links to other HCP/NCCPs in the region be sent to the SAC for them to review as samples/examples of where we are headed in our process.

7. Working Group Updates

Working group meetings will be scheduled for the next few months. They will each meeting twice a month. Members will be notified for preferred times, days, and locations.

- *Biological Working Group*

The Biological Working Group has completed an initial review of the species accounts. The wildlife agencies have also commented with recommendations on the draft covered species list. Input on those recommendations is being gathered which will be incorporated into a revised document that will be sent to the Biological Working Group before discussions resume with DFG and FWS. The desired outcome is that the plan will provide enough coverage and protection as possible given time and resources.

The recommendation will then come back to the SAC for approval or comment and then sent to the JPA Board with a recommendation. The species list may contract or expand up until the approval of the final plan. DFG/FWS staff in attendance commented regarding the “rumor” that the DFG wants to enter into a dialogue because of concerns about the process being timely and realistic. They stated a willingness to continue the dialogue. This is the start of discussion and no final decisions have been made. This iterative process is normal.

COMMENT

Roberts noted that the County General Plan update has changed recently. We will have the option of focusing this plan on covered species without weakening the General Plan conservation efforts. We can help strengthen the county’s plan without worrying whether our plan is the only county effort at conservation.

- Agriculture Habitat Interface Working Group

[Meetings to be scheduled.]

- Urban Habitat Interface Working Group

[Meetings to be scheduled.]

8. Public Comment

No public comments.

9. Announcements and Updates

Stefan Lorenzato: The Cache Creek Technical Advisory Committee met to discuss renovations at the Capay Dam. The dam is potentially unstable and will need to be rebuilt or reinforced. That project is ongoing and participation is welcome. The current group is in favor of maintaining the dam's function in providing water as it has for the past 90 years.

10. Summary and Next Steps

The Bay-Delta Conservation Planning group made a presentation to the JPA. We will bring that presentation to this group as well.

The consulting team is having a planning meeting on Feb. 6 to develop a detailed strategy and schedule for completing the plan. They will present that to the SAC at a future meeting.

The next meeting of the Advisory Committee will be held on Monday, February 9, 2009 at 6:00 p.m. at the Yolo County Administration Building, Atrium Training Room, in Woodland.

12. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:35 p.m.